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27 April 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with NSC Staff Members on the
Military Estimates

1. After two postponements, Barry Carter and Col. Jack Merritt of the NSC Staff came out to CIA this morning to discuss the next round of military estimates. This had been billed as a private session with [REDACTED] and myself, but ONE was also represented by [REDACTED]

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25X1A9a [REDACTED] and toward the end of the meeting, John [REDACTED]. I was the only non-ONE participant and suspect, in retrospect, that the only reason I was there was that Carter and Merritt had repeatedly checked to make sure that I was invited.

2. After a 20-minute introductory speech by [REDACTED] on ONE's roles and missions as applied to military estimates, the visitors were given the floor. The first question was whether 11-14 would follow the pattern of 11-8 and 11-3. The short answer was No, not exactly. There would be much detail in the annexes but a relatively short main text. This "different approach" resulted, according to [REDACTED] to a conscious decision about a year ago to give the readers a choice as to which approach they preferred.

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3. This drew no direct comment, but Carter and Merritt then swung into a recapitulation of why the NSC Staff, Kissinger, and the President liked the new tack taken with 11-8 and 11-3. Carter made much of the usefulness of 11-8 for day-to-day reference. Merritt stressed the value of such a paper as a tutorial document, pointing out that there was a constant turnover of people involved in the policy-making process and thus a constant influx of new people to be educated. (Even people like Kissinger and Gardiner Tucker, he noted, wouldn't be around forever.) Both indicated that in an era in which

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intelligence judgments were not necessarily accepted as authoritative and in which others advanced their own views, it was all the more important that intelligence community judgments and the specific facts and assumptions on which they were based should be spelled out. Quite clearly they were interested in having strong, well-reasoned CIA or intelligence community positions which could be used to assess the validity of threat assessments put forward by interested parties in the Pentagon and elsewhere. Specific reference was made to a DoD projection which assumed Full Operational Capability for extremely accurate MIRVs well before 11-8 deemed it possible.

4. Related NSC staff concerns emerged in a brief ensuing discussion of what might be given greater emphasis in future editions of 11-8 and 11-3. Both Merritt and Carter asked for more explicit treatment of topics bearing on how the Soviets might actually intend to use the weapons systems they had developed--for example, why a system such as the Kaz-A had been approved for development in the first place, how Soviet doctrine viewed the circumstances under which nuclear weapons would be used, and what was known about Soviet command and control arrangements and readiness levels. Some of these concerns obviously represented the influence of Andy Marshall of RAND, who has long preached the importance of trying to take explicit account of bureaucratic influences on the kinds and numbers of strategic weapons to be procured. (Unfortunately we had to point out once again that the evidence to support this otherwise promising line of analysis is usually insufficient to support much more than speculation.) The NSC Staff pitch clearly also represented a desire to have a better basis for judging threat scenarios advanced by various interested parties in exercises like the current DPRC survivability and strategic posture study--is it realistic to assume, for example, that the Soviets would use all of their SS-9s and a large proportion of their SS-11s in a counterforce role against Minuteman?

5. Carter specifically asked that we tighten up the discussion of "Indirect Approaches to Longer Term Estimates" in Section XI of 11-8, and that we might

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issue special NIEs or separate studies on questions of command and control and doctrine. (Merritt had previously singled out Para. 221 of 11-8, which discussed Soviet decision making in very general terms, as an example of the kind of treatment which really didn't tell the reader anything.) Merritt and Carter cited as the sort of thing they were interested in our recent papers on the likely Soviet perception of the threat and on Soviet procedures for release of nuclear weapons. They also expressed interest in the SS-9 paper that Kissinger has asked us to go forward with. I briefly noted some work in progress, in particular the [REDACTED] project relating Soviet doctrine on employment of nuclear weapons with observed readiness levels.

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6. We finally got down to the practical questions at the end. Although the information provided by the NSC people will presumably still have to be confirmed by Dr. K, they expressed confidence that they had had a pretty good idea of what was wanted. Specifically:

a. Merritt and Carter had no problems with the proposed reordering of the estimates, with 11-14 coming first, 11-3 following in July-August, and 11-8 targeted for September. They agreed that it was desirable to have the estimate available for Pentagon planners by October but added that the JCS and others would have NIE drafts and their own departmental intelligence resources available in case it proved desirable to have 11-8 slip, say, in order to incorporate expected late information.

b. With 11-3 this time, a Memorandum to Holders would be acceptable. It definitely would not in the case of 11-8, where the requirement was for a full-dress estimate that would be complete in itself. At first it looked as though the NSC people wanted large chunks of text reprinted as is. They finally appeared to accept, however, a suggestion by [REDACTED] that we endeavor to write an essentially new main text focussed on current issues, with older material which needed to be incorporated for reference purposes relegated to annexes.

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c. Merritt asked whether there were any reservations about the projections. After some mumbling about DIA's objections, [REDACTED] 25X1A9a spoke up to the effect that as far as CIA was concerned, the President's letter had resolved the question--that the Director was quite clear in his own mind what the requirements were and was not disposed to do any temporizing with DIA.

25X1A9a d. [REDACTED] asked Merritt if he had any suggestions about the kind of projections wanted for 11-14. Merritt said that he had not looked at that subject matter much recently but would try to respond.

25X1A9a 7. I had a brief exchange with [REDACTED] after 25X1A9a the meeting broke up in which the question of the DIA proposal came up. In indicating that he was proposing it be rejected he said he thought that [REDACTED] 25X1A9a had missed the point in discussing the NIEs as though they were prepared primarily for people in the Pentagon. He also expressed some irritation with DIA's decision to produce Defense Intelligence Estimates on the grounds that these were not very useful papers and that having this additional crop of estimates in circulation would probably confuse a number of readers.

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Executive Officer
Strategic Research

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